

**NEW JERSEY  
BEST PRACTICES  
2002-2003 APPLICATION**

**Failure to comply with the procedures for submission of the application will result in the elimination of the application.**

**Application Requirements:**

1. **RESPONSES** to the information and the statements below must be **ANONYMOUS** and **ACCURATE**. No reference should be made to the names of the district, the school(s) or community. Use the words "the school" or "the schools" in responding to the statements
2. **USE ONLY THE SPACE PROVIDED ON THE APPLICATION FORM** on pages 1, 2 (if applicable), and 4. Do not include any additional materials, as they will not be reviewed in the selection process.
3. Applications must be typed on 8 1/2" x 11" white paper, portrait format. Twelve-point or larger computer font or fourteen-pitch or larger typewritten font must be used. This sentence is in twelve-point Times New Roman.
4. Keybaorded responses to all the statements below must be no more than a total of four pages. Keyboard and number the statement followed by the response. Format your response for clarity.
5. The information on page 4 and the responses to statements must be copied on one side of the page. The information on pages 1 and 2 (if applicable) must be copied on one side of the page. Staple pages 1, 2 (if applicable), 4, and the keybaorded responses together, in that same order.
6. The original application must be signed by the district chief school administrator or charter school lead person, indicating his/her approval.
7. The original and seven copies of the application must be submitted to the county superintendent of schools by December 15, 2002, with the Itemized List of District Applications form. Keep the seven copies of each application together with the original containing the signature of the district chief school administrator or charter school lead person on the top of each set.

The following data is required to assist the panelists in the evaluation of the application:		
<b>Type of School</b>	<b>Grade Levels</b>	<b>Practice Name</b> <u>Primary Pals</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Elementary School	<u>PreK-2</u>	Number of Schools with Practice <u>1</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Middle School	<input type="checkbox"/>	Number of Districts with Practice <u>None</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Junior High School	<input type="checkbox"/>	Location <input type="checkbox"/> Urban/City <input type="checkbox"/> Suburban With Urban Characteristics
<input type="checkbox"/> High School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Suburban <input type="checkbox"/> Small City/Town <input type="checkbox"/> Rural
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: <input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Check the ONE CATEGORY into which the practice best fits.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Arts (Visual and Performing Arts)	<input type="checkbox"/> Gifted and Talented Programs	<input type="checkbox"/> Safe Learning Environment
<input type="checkbox"/> Assessment/Evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/> Guidance and Counseling Programs	<input type="checkbox"/> School-to-Careers/Workplace Readiness
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Citizenship/Character Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Health and Physical Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Science
<input type="checkbox"/> Diversity and Equity Programs	<input type="checkbox"/> Language Arts Literacy	<input type="checkbox"/> Social Studies
<input type="checkbox"/> Early Childhood Education Programs	<input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Education
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational Support Programs	<input type="checkbox"/> Professional Development	<input type="checkbox"/> World Languages/Bilingual Education
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational Technology	<input type="checkbox"/> Public Engagement	
	(family involvement and partnerships with business, community, school districts, and/or higher education)	

1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative and how it promotes high student achievement.
2. List the specific *Core Curriculum Content Standards*, including the *Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards*,\* addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses those standard(s). Provide an example to substantiate your response.
3. Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met. Provide assessments and data to show how the practice met these needs.
4. Describe how you would replicate the practice in another school and/or district.

\*The 2002 edition of the *Core Curriculum Content Standards* published by the New Jersey State Department of Education was disseminated to all districts and charter schools and is available on line through the department's web site at <http://www.state.nj.us/education>.

## Best Practice

1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative and how it promotes high student achievement.

As an educator, I have seen how low student self-esteem and low academic performance often exacerbate each other. I am principal of a primary school, prekindergarten through Grade 2, located in an affluent suburb that is part of the New York City metropolitan area.

The school district enjoys an excellent reputation as one of New Jersey's most academically challenging districts. The primary school where I am principal provides a caring, stimulating environment aimed at developing each student's self-esteem as well as instilling a love for learning and knowledge. The board of education, faculty, and staff members are committed to providing each student with a highly challenging academic program in an atmosphere of respect for individual and cultural differences. The mission of the school is to develop students' abilities to advance their future education. In addition, the school strives to help each student learn to contribute socially and to compete productively in an increasingly technological and global society.

Notwithstanding these higher community standards, in 1995, I decided that the school should help prevent at-risk children from "falling through the cracks," and I began to investigate a program that addressed problems of low self-esteem and low academic achievement.

The program known as *Primary Pals* is an after-school, cross-age tutoring program conducted at the primary school one day each week by selected high school students. Approximately twelve second-grade students selected for the after-school, cross-age program receive individual assistance completing their homework and studying for age-appropriate tests.

The objectives of the program are:

1. Students would improve their performance on the district assessment.
2. Students would improve their self-esteem
3. Students would increase the amount of homework turned in to the teacher.
4. Students would improve behavior with a goal of reducing to zero the number of behavioral forms returned by teachers.

The program included two affective objectives that included:

1. Second grade students would carry out new responsibilities as tutors of first grade students through participation in the *Primary Pals* reading program and through lunchtime activities with younger students.
2. Based on the continued observations of teachers, students would demonstrate increased self-confidence in classroom participation after serving as tutors of younger students.

I selected the high school cross-age tutors as being good role models and who were able to assist younger students. These high school tutors also displayed good character traits and expressed a willingness to overlook the various physical and emotional differences between themselves and the students they would be tutoring. I conducted an orientation session for the volunteer high school student tutors, informing them about detailed aspects of the after-school, cross-age tutoring program. I conveyed the basic goals in working with younger students as

follows: (a) improved grades, (b) heightened positive attitudes toward school, (c) increased sense of achievement, (d) improved self-confidence, (e) clearer sense of personal direction, (f) increased sense of personal direction, and (g) an internalized responsibility.

Before the program began, the tutors received after-school training in the purpose of the program and their responsibilities. Several questions were discussed with role-playing:

1. What will a second grade student be like?
2. How should I start our relationship?
3. How do I get a second grade student to talk?
4. How do I get a second grade student interested?
5. Why are second grade students' attention spans so short?
6. What tutoring techniques work best?

All of these questions were discussed in the tutor training. I explained each point for the tutors and emphasized the commitment each tutor must make to the program. Also discussed relative to the tutors' responsibilities were punctuality, confidentiality, and positive regard for the student being tutored.

The high school tutors plan their hour of one-on-one tutoring using the following steps:

1. Stimulate discussions about the second grade child's day at school.
2. Decide if the child needs to discuss any social or academic problems.
3. Design a task. If the student has a social problem or was given a student behavior form, begin the session by discussing the problem.
4. Complete written or study homework.
5. If time is available, select a library book to read to the student or select a computer program for reading or mathematics instruction.

The second grade students also become "tutors" in a *Primary Pals* reading program and a lunchtime activity. I assign the second grade students to be a first grade classroom reader and a first grade lunchtime helper. For example, one day a week two students in the program spend 15 minutes visiting a first grade class to read a story to a small group of students. One day a week the two students give up their playtime with their second grade friends to help the first grade students during lunch and recess.

2. List the specific *Core Curriculum Content Standards*, including the *Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards*, addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses those standard(s). Provide an example to substantiate your response.

### **Standard 1: All Students will Develop Career Planning and Workplace Readiness Skills.**

1. Demonstrate employability skills and work habits, such as work ethic, dependability, promptness, and getting along with others, needed to keep a job.  
*Primary Pals* must learn to be prompt everyday they are assigned to read in a first grade classroom or report to the lunchroom whereby they assist in lunchtime activities. The *Primary Pals* must learn to work together cooperatively with the *Primary Pals* selected from other second grade classes.
2. Describe the importance of personal skills and attitudes to job success.  
*Primary Pals* must demonstrate a positive attitude in the lunchroom as well as in the first grade classroom where they get an opportunity to read a story to younger students.

**Standard 3: All Students Will Use Critical Thinking, Decision Making And Problem Solving Skills.**

1. Recognize and define a problem, or clarify decisions to be made.  
When *Primary Pals* are outdoors on the playground after helping in the lunchroom, often times they are confronted by arguments among students. The *Primary Pals* are encouraged to try to assist those students in settling their differences.
2. Use models, relationships and observations to clarify problems and potential solutions.  
During meetings held regularly with the principal, there is much discussion about being a role model for the younger students in the school.
5. Use the library media center as a critical resource for inquiry and assessment of print and non-print materials.  
*Primary Pals* work with the librarian on selecting a book each week to read to the first grade students.

**Standard 4: All Students will demonstrate Self-Management Skills.**

2. Work cooperatively with others to accomplish a task.
3. Evaluate their own actions and accomplishments.
4. Describe constructive responses to criticism.
5. Provide constructive criticism to others.
6. Describe actions, which demonstrate respect for people of different races, ages, religion, ethnicity and gender.

Standard 4 is the basic, fundamental philosophy of the *Primary Pals* program, engaging students to be able to work harmoniously together in school as well as outside of school. It encourages young children to take pride in their accomplishments and to be able to give positive feedback to their friends. Yet, on the other hand, students must be able to articulate when they are not pleased with something a classmate said or did.

The *Primary Pals* are responsible for assisting in implementing the monthly themes for our Character Education Program. Our themes are based on five values: respect, responsibility, honesty, compassion and self-worth. Each month, based on a Character Education value, the *Primary Pals* head up a special school drive--in November, our Food Pantry Drive; December, The Giving Tree where child bring in gloves, mittens, hats and scarves for needy children living in nearby shelters, in January, our Winter Coat Drive; and in March our Shoebox Toiletry Drive. It is during these special events that the *Primary Pals* write speeches that they deliver to the student body encouraging school-wide participation. They also get the opportunity to meet with the heads of churches, shelters and halfway houses where many of the donations and contributions are distributed.

3. Describe the educational needs of the students that the practice addresses. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met. Provide assessments and data to show how the practice met these needs.

In 1995, a review of academic grades, test scores and other cumulative student data revealed that the students that would be targeted for the *Primary Pals* Program displayed low self-esteem, inappropriate behavior or poor academic performance. In reviewing the students' files, they revealed an inability to get along with peers, failure to submit homework, fear of classroom participation, and an overall lack of self-confidence to succeed in school.

Based on test scores, my personal observations, and daily discussions with individual classroom teachers, I selected twelve students to participate in the *Primary Pals* Program. After the first year of the program, the teachers of the twelve students selected reported that the students were calmer and exhibited less aggressive behavior in class and during playtime. This group of students had fewer disciplinary referrals to the principal's office. The teachers reported that the selected students worked better with classmates after their participation in *Primary Pals* Program and that they talked as they never had before with teachers and classmates about relevant school topics. I informed the teachers to expect the students to submit homework 1 of the 4 days on average. During the course of the after-school, cross-age tutoring program, the students did, indeed, submit homework more frequently than before. The after-school cross-age tutoring program has continued since 1995. During these years, positive statements and accolades were received from parents, students and other administrators. The students expressed enthusiasm and excitement relative to their participation in the program.

In 1997, the school district no longer used Standardized Tests to measure achievement at the primary level. I surveyed parents to determine if the after-school, cross-age tutoring *Primary Pals* Program had an effect on their child's self-esteem and academic achievement.

A sampling of comments were as follows:

1. The cross-age tutoring program provides the much-needed aspect of community service for our high school students.
2. The cross-age tutors have a positive way of touching the academic and emotional lives of the students they are tutoring.
3. The school is working toward a common goal.
4. The program should be opened up to more students.

During the 2002-03 school year, nine years after the inception of the program, I have acquired my first "waiting list" from parents who believe their children would benefit from the program.

4. Describe how you would replicate the practice in another school and/district.

Target the oldest population in the school as students in need of enhancing self-esteem and improving academic achievement by having teachers complete a Peer Tutoring Referral Form. Upon selecting students to participate, select the same number of high school students who are role models and display good character. Meet with high school students to discuss with them how they will go about working after school with the younger students. Designate the number of days, the amount of time and the day(s) of the week that the after school component will take place. Send letters/permission slips to parents gaining their consent. Be prepared to meet with the target population on a regular basis to discuss how they feel about working with their after-school, cross-age tutor and how they like working in the lunchroom, on the playground and reading to the first grade students one day a week. The *Primary Pal* students will also have to meet with the librarian. They must be certain to select age-appropriate reading materials for the first grade class to enjoy and for them to be able to read successfully.

The after-school, cross-age tutoring and *Primary Pals* Program has been replicated nine consecutive years. My greatest reward came this year when one of the former *Primary Pals*, now a high school student, volunteered to be a cross-age tutor.